DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 089 SO 022 705

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TITLE Multicultural Education: An International Perspective.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Influences; Cultural Interrelationships; Cultural Pluralism; *Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; *Ethnic Groups; Foreign Countries; Foreign Culture; Intercultural Programs; International Education; *Multicultural Education; *Role of Education

ABSTRACT

The various ways in which countries use their educational systems to socialize ethnic minorities to the dominant culture is the topic of this paper. Different approaches countries have taken toward the education of minorities are identified. In the "recognition approach," the rights of minority languages, culture, and education are acknowledged in national constitutions; for example, India. The "unification approach" has been used in cases of common nationality while preserving different languages and cultures of minority groups. Tanzania and its official language Kiswahili provide an example of this approach. In the "integration approach," schools, language, and external pressure are brought to bear on the immigrant to integrate into the mainstream of the homogeneous society. The United States, Canada, and Australia have utilized this approach in recent history. The "laissez-faire" approach is prevalent in older countries that have had an influx of immigrants but chose to ignore them until problems became acute and something had to be done. Great Britain is cited as a classic example of this approach. The paper seeks to clarify the concepts of multicultural education and intercultural education, and discusses the problems multicultural education has encountered in trying to achieve legitimation. (Contains 33 references.) (DB)

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# MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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**MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Education is regarded as an instrument of selection and a source of economic and political power, as well as a means for molding the character of a state, e.g. providing a system of education to meet the needs of a culturally diverse population has been a recurring issue in American education. To secure the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness--the inalienable rights --one of the major delivery systems was education (Male, 1974). Education was considered necessary for the promotion of the moral, social and economic development of the citizenry and the proper functioning of the new democratic system. The institution of a system of education, however, posed a problem. The crux of the problem, then as now, arose from the realization that the citizenry was a diverse group in spite of its basically western European origins, and that this diversity encompassed class, caste and ethnicity.

Education can preserve or promote change, depending on how the system is organized, who formulates and adopts policies, and what purpose it is intended to serve. The politics of decision-making in relation to the diversity and unity in education differs from one country to another. There is no final solution as to what is universally valid. What aspect of a national culture should be included in the curriculum is a problem policy-makers and educators have to grapple with (Bullivant, 1984). In

the socialization of ethnic minorities to the dominant culture, political and educational systems intersect. This policy concern applies not only to the new nations, but every modern nation is similarly engaged. This article examines this phenomenon in selected countries and indicates its utility for developing the social-political theory of dealing with the minorities. The cultural forces of the ethnic minority can be language (Walloons in Belgium on the Multilanguage sectiors of Switzerland), sometimes sect (the Judaic differences within Israel) and sometime a "native" culture (Ainns of Japan, Lapps of Scandinavia). The second part of the paper deals with some of the problems that multicultural education encounters in order to achieve legitimation. The paper begins with clarifications of the concepts of multicultural and intercultural education.

## WHAT IS MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?

There are many conceptualizations of multicultural education--it means different things to different people--the literature is replete with definitions that reflect the coexistence of cultural diversity (Brown, 1988; Lynch, 1989; Boulding, 1988; Sleeter & Frank, 1987; Secada, 1990; Ogbu, 1990; and Gibson, 1991). One of the more definitive delineations is that given by the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) in "No One Model America: A Statement of Multicultural Education:

Multicultural education is education which values cultural

pluralism. Multicultural education rejects the view that schools should seek to melt away cultural pluralism. Instead, Multicultural Education affirms that schools should be oriented toward the cultural enrichment of all children and youth through programs rooted to the preservation and extension of cultural alternatives (1979:36).

Lately Multicultural Education has taken on new dimensions, such as empowerment of the individual, and social, economic and environmental goals at community and national levels. A delicate balance is drawn between the rights and needs of the individual and social responsibilities of others, seeking to facilitate a creative and satisfying citizenship in an evolving democratic society (Lynch, 1991). The combination of individual rights and societal responsibility has not always been achieved. This has led to the new concept of intercultural education.

With intercultural education the emphasis shifts. Given the numbers of migrant groups that have come to participate at the least in the economy of a particular nation, schools are under an obligation to teach about the cultures of each group and to permit each group to maintain many elements of its own culture including language. Intercultural education has been proposed as a remedy or alternative especially appropriate given the mix of nationalities found today in most industrial countries. (Rey, 1786).

Intercultural education has been built on the recognition that the prevailing migration phenomenon place different cultures

in contact. The resultant interdependence precludes nationalism or isolationism. Hence it behooves schools to focus on the culture of each group whose children are in attendance for their benefit and the benefit of the others that share a classroom or school. "Intercultural education...concerns all children, all teachers, the whole school community and the whole of school life, all the subjects taught and all parents and partners in education, both in the host countries and in the countries of origin" (Rey, 1986, p. 14). The intercultural encounters are seen as enriching rather than divisive.

Intercultural education lays a foundation for the acceptance of cultural differences as well as for the identification of similarities. "It is important to know that the group to which one belongs is neither the center nor the summit of the world" (Leurin, p. 9) Intercultural education is conceptualized as process and action based, for the reality of interdependence spells a need for interaction among cultural groups inside and outside one's own nation. For example, The Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC), the educational arm of the Council of Europe, in its Project No. 7, "The education and cultural development of migrants", arrived at eleven proposals for the implementation of intercultural education. Some of the key proposals are:

a. The intercultural approach means a mutual recognition between cultures of origin and host cultures, and between the various cultural expressions (of the

migrants and the indigenous population) in a single community. These cultures are never static, but creative; they change according to the interactions at work...

b. Recognition of the equal value of different cultures must not obscure the fact that in reality they exist in the context of relations of economic, political and cultural dominance, that is to say the cultures of the host countries are in a position of dominance with regard to the cultural expressions of migrants and the cultures of their countries of origin. In a democratic and pluralist perspective it is therefore important that the school, through the power of legitimation vested in it, should confer enhanced status on the cultures of migrants and their countries of origin. It can do this by the place it gives to the various languages and cultures and by the interest it shows in them...

c. Since children of different cultures today learn together in schools, it is important that all pupils should be able to experience communication with others in a real and positive way, that is to say that both migrant and indigenous children should be able to share the same experience and feel equally accepted, a <u>sine qua non</u> for the development of their own tolerance.

d. A necessary precondition for learning is communication between school, family, the social environment in which the children live and the whole community, both migrant and indigenous (Rey, 1986:p33).

The last two guidelines for intercultural education posit the plea (1) for cooperation between countries of origin and host countries to reduce problems arising from cultural and economic differences in schooling and (2) for appropriate teacher education (Rey, 1986).

While intercultural education and multicultural education differ there is an overlap when it comes to implementation. This has to do with cultural differences found among students in a single classroom. The practices that have been initiated by different nations in this regard are informative. The typologies used here are for analytical purposes only. Within each country, there will be different interpretations of policy. With this caveat a brief discussion of each typology follows:

**RECOGNITION APPROACH**: The rights of minority languages, culture, and education are recognized in national constitutions, e.g., India. Faced with a multitude of languages and dialects, approximately 826 in 22 different states, at independence, the Indian government had to make language policy in three areas, viz. (a) official language(s) for administrative and official work, (b) medium of instruction and language of study in schools and colleges, and (c) development and promotion of languages and scripts as part of the preservation of the national culture

(Singh, 1986). Provisions were made in the 1947 independent constitution to accommodate the language problem--e.g. Article 343 - sanctions Hindi as the official language of the union, at the same time English was to continue as the official language for 15 years. Article 345 allows various state legislatures to adopt regional languages or Hindi for all or any official purposes of the state -- 15 official languages. Article 30 allows linguistic minorities to set up schools and apply for government grants/aid (Chaudri, 1968). While India remains besite with problems related to minority issues, legal protection is provided for all. The issue of implementing laws that protect minorities is one that all nations face.

**UNIFICATION APPROACH** has been used in cases of common nationality while preserving different languages and culture of minority groups. Schooling however is through a different language, e.g. Tanzania and Kiswahili. Kiswahili--Arabic origin--was the lingua-franca of the east African coastal strip in the early 19th century. Despite two colonial experiences--German and British--the language has survived and is today the official language of Tanzania (Oliver and Mathew, 1962). The fact that Kiswahili is an amalgamation of various dialects, makes it appealing to various ethnic groups, since it belongs to no one group in particular. The language was effectively used in Tanzania's drive for independence from colonial rule. The fact that Kiswahili is written gives it additional advantage. This is in sharp contrast to other countries in Africa, especially West

Africa, where English or French is still the dominant language, and where the use of local languages are treated either with hostility or severely frowned upon.

**INTEGRATION APPROACH**. In this context, the schools, language, and external pressure are brought to bear on the immigrant to integrate into the mainstream of the homogeneous society. The assumption is that it is only through integration that the immigrant can fully benefit from the prevailing social system. This used to be the policy in the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia (Wirt, 1979; Kehole, 1982). In Australia for a long time the "myth of homogeneity" dominated the educational system. Blatant assimilationist policy was pursued on the assumption that Anglo-Saxon was best. While earlier waves of immigrants accepted cultural dominance with relative passivity, in the late 1970s, postwar immigrants, displaced persons, often highly qualified in their own cultures, rebelled against their treatment. Since the late 1970s, efforts have been made through the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs to promote a cohesive Australian society through the sharing of diverse cultures (Bullivart, 1984; Ogbu, 1983).

It is worth observing that assimilation does not in itself help social mobility; if a dominant majority wishes to exclude a minority and refuses to share certain kinds of jobs with it, it can continue to do so, no matter how culturally assimilated the group might become, e.g. the Jews in Nazi Germany and the

holocaust; the Welsh of Britain (Wirt, 1979). A loss of core elements in an ethnic culture does not itself guarantee equality of treatment in occupational and social life, e.g. second generation black Canadians (Wilson, 1990). Even where schools overlay most aspects of ethnic minority behavior, this is not likely to obliterate all traces of ethnic origin such as surname, physical looks and mannerism and cultural residues. Minorities can still be identified as not belonging to a majority group despite valiantly trying to embrace dominant culture in its entirety. African Americans have lost most traces of their African cultural past but are not made any more acceptable to the dominant group. Ogbu (1986) refers to their "caste-like minority" status within America despite nearly three hundred years of experience. The concept of assimilation also posit problems for analytical and empirical purposes. With total assimilation, any sense of distinction from the dominant culture is lost, e.g. the Pomeranians of the Pre Unity Germany. Thus for analytical purposes, the minority must have some visibility in social and political life, meaning some differences fron the dominant culture.

The **LAISSEZ-FAIRE APPROACH** is prevalent in older countries who have had an influx of immigrants but chose to ignore them until problems became acute and something had to be done. The official policy pursued is laissez-faire, with the decision left to individual local authorities. The British are a classic example of this approach (DES, 1988; Lynch, 1986; Jeffcoate, 1979; Wirt, 1979). Since World War II Britain increasingly became a multiracial society. Not only has the country served as

a haven for political refugees from the Third Reich, and subsequently from Eastern Europe and then the Middle East, but Britain also has received, albeit often reluctantly, people from her former colonial empire. People from Third World countries are now well represented among Britain's resident population, especially West Indians, Indians and Pakistanes.

The DES (Department of Education and Science) for many years used "in-explicitness" as a policy preference--thus denying that a problem existed, distinctions were kept as blurred as possible; officially, the relevance of color was minimized; no special educational programs were in placed, aimed directly as non-whites, and race played only an inexplicit part in the policy making calculus (Male, 1980; Rose et al 1969; Kirp, 1979). For example, DES started out by using the term "immigrant problem", it qiuckly became the "colored immigrant problem", and now frequently in Britain is referred to as the "education of blacks", meaning not only the West Indians but also immigrants from India and Pakistan. Even today (1992) race is tacitly understood but not mandated as "social need". The DES rationale was that given time, things will work out; all efforts were seen as unnecessary and possibly harmful. The major reports of the 60's and 70's, (i.e. The Robbins Report, 1963, The Newson Report, 1965; The Plowder report, 1967 and The Green paper, 1977) made only passing reference to minority issues. In many of the reports, only a sentence or so was devoted to the education of "Blacks".

The 1980's brought some changes in official policy, for example: While the Government's Swann Report (1985) in

educational issues related to minority population implied that cultural pluralism was the goal and not assimilation into the dominant English culture, practices in London schools often believe that position (DES, 1985).

There have been some local developments to address the issue of racism. For example, the Inner London Education Authority has adopted a city-wide policy of "positive help" for all ethnic minorities in a context of "cultural pluralism" (IlEA, 1988). The Institute for Race Relations has made efforts to publicize racism in the country. Local developments, positive as they are, have come too late and cover too little. Signs of separatist development in light of lack of government policy and continuous racism, are discernible, e.g. Muslims and Hindu group have established separate High Schools and there is talk of eventually having a complete system with universities, and teacher training institutes (Taylor, 1974). Militant groups have arisen among the various minority groups with a view of violently opposing the established system. This is seen for example in the race riots of the summer of 1984.

The second part of this paper discusses some of the dilemmas in multicultural education. One of the pressing issues is that of <u>legitimation</u>. The amorphous character and undefined parameters of multicultural education have raised questions of legitimacy. This nebulous situation has led both its advocates and opponents to raise several basic questions: Is multicultural education a discipline of ethnic studies? Is it a philosophy? Is it cognitive or affective, or both? Is it compensatory education for minority racial groups? Is it a panacea for the

ills of minority students?

Another issue is that of what **structure** multicultural education should follow. Should it be operationalized as a group of separate ethnic studies? There is a danger that the very nature of their separateness will fall short of the multicultural ideal and may result in what Cuban (1987) calls "educational enclaves without introducing substantive changes." The original reason for starting multicultural education was largely as a palliative to minority demands, and it was designed basically to pacify rather than educate.

The **division** between bilingual education, global education, gender, handicap, social class and multicultural education needs to be re-examined. This dichotomy has led to the tragedy of individuals who are committed to these areas aligning themselves against each other along the false line of demarcation and expending their energies fighting each other for inadequate resources. The ignoring of the prima facie relationship between culture and language is saddening. Language is not just a component of culture, its very essence comes from culture.

There is an urgent need to distinguish **compensatory** education from multicultural education. Compensatory education is improving the school environment with remedial programs and special activities which can compensate for many of the disadvantages experienced by all students and can result in more effective learning and greater educational achievement. In the past, and to some extent even now, minority students, for

whatever reasons have been assigned to this type of education.

The lack of suitable educational **materials** is another issue. At present the educational market is flooded with the coloring game and the materials reek of velvet racism, i.e. many books have added a black face here, a brown face there, without any fundamental change in the text. What is needed is culturally pluralistic materials, not tokens (Whitehead, 1988; Elkin & Triggs, 1986).

**Funding** is always a problem in education and is made doubly so when a program relies on "soft monies"--federal government, corporations and the surplus "crisis" funds in the budgets of school districts. Multicultural education exists on such soft money--especially Title 9 of Heritage Act in the U.S.A. How will the programs sustain their existence when grants are fewer as the cross-cultural crisis abates? To be truly successful hard money is needed to support multicultural education. Multicultural education has never been targeted for federal funding, its development has been subsidized from related areas such as Ethnic Studies, Bilingual education and Teacher Corps. The 1980's has not been an auspicious decade to seek funding for multicultural education.

Another vexing issues is who should be the **recipients** of this type of education. Many believe it is for minority children only--this is not true. Multicultural Education is for all children. It is crucial for efforts in this direction to begin in the schools, if not in the homes. Teacher Education

Institutions have a special role to play in this as NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) seems to agree, i.e. Multiethnic courses or experiences for teacher education students is a prerequisite for a school to be accredited (NCATE, 1990).

Finally who should teach multicultural programs? It is the belief of many in the educational world that unless a person is a member of a minority group, he/she cannot be a valid instructor in multicultural education-- "experience philosophy syndrome." This question is paramount in terms of teacher education, especially when one realizes the large number of teachers teaching minority students and not having the necessary skills and competencies to provide a culturally pluralistic program. The typical elementary teacher, is white, female, middle class, with a narrow cultural base. In order to avoid ethnocentrism, it is important that all teachers have a culturally diverse repertoire of experiences, thus enabling them not only to relate positively to a multicultural population, but also to be able to provide multicultural experiences for their students. The NCATE prerequisite is a necessary first step. However, to make it worthwhile it should be treated as the core of a teacher training program not an "add on." The programs need to be reconceptualized to include as a basic component an underlying philosophy of cultural pluralism. It is not enough to just espouse multicultural education or make the overt gestures like celebrating ethnic festivals and holidays featuring song and

dance, cooking and tasting ethnic foods, or national costume shows, exotic places which obscure more subtle, implicit, and invisible differences.

Teachers, in particular, must be especially sensitive in what they say or do in and out of class, to avoid unconscious remarks that can be interpreted as racism, e.g. a student asks a teacher if a class is easy, the teacher answers "I don't know but most of the football players take it" or a teacher says in a class of diverse cultural and ethnic students, "I see no color and I treat all my students the same." The teacher would not label herself/himself as racist. On the contrary, the teacher would probably vehemently deny racism. The teachers' actions, however are racist (Gay, 1982).

It is imperative that those concerned with minority education take into consideration the compatibility or incompatibility of the home and school cultures of minority culture children. The minority culture members should not be the only ones to develop competence in the dominant culture, it should be vice versa. The present reform movement in teacher education e.g.--The Holmes Group project--fails to address the issue seriously. In West Germany for instance, it is possible to major in education of minority children at several teacher colleges.

What is the state of the field at present in the U.S.? It seems that multicultural education is not progressing as quickly as in the late 60s and 70s. Policy making in the area seems to

be stagnant or in limbo. What little resurgence is toward process oriented study not content, i.e. infusion into existing curricula. There is little discussion of policy. The conservative agenda and the move by some state to declare English as the official language indicate little progress. In some areas the civil rights gains of the 60s and 70s have been rolled back, e.g., the reduction/elimination of special recruiting and assistance programs; lessened federal emphasis on Affirmative Action coupled with changes in federal aid from grants to loans may be reducing minority enrollments at universities--there was a decline in the Black student population from 9.4% in 1976 to 6.6% in 1986 and the trend points to slight improvement. The percentage increase is now 10% (CES, 1991). Blacks have become endangered species at universities.

Racial incidents at campuses all over the country, limiting enrollment of certain ethnic groups in the sciences points to the sad state of affairs in race relations. The continuous dependence of blacks on affirmative action underscores their caste-like status despite all the social and legislative programs of the early 1960s.

Conclusion

This paper has set forth a heuristic framework for understanding basic pattern in the efforts of nation - states to achieve some degree of understanding of minority issues. The cases studies illuminate a basic typology and suggest several modes of interaction developed from a basic paradigm. The

typology rests upon minority acceptance of dominant values and minority acceptance into the decision - making subsystems of the dominant culture.

The world culture is multifaceted; each facet is essential to its totality and to heighten its richness. If the manifest function of education is to transmit the cultural heritage it must recognize the multifaceted nature of that heritage. It seems, therefore, that schools should become more responsive to cultural pluralism and committed to multicultural education as the vehicle for achieving goals consistent with the needs of the clientele they serve. We do live in a culturally pluralistic society and our strength lies not in our ability to mold everyone to the same pattern, but in our ability to draw from our unique differences for the common good. The need for multicultural education can not be over stated.

These are indications that education must function within a changing social scene that is aware of and sensitive to cultural diversity and, at the same time, it must realize that all cultures interact with and may have implicit commonalities with all others. Education must recognize the importance of educating individuals to behavior that reflects commonalities. The schools, therefore, must concern themselves with the preparation of individuals to live in a society and world of varied races, cultures and life styles.

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